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Good morning Chairman Lawlor, Chairman McDonald and members of the Judiciary. I'm here to express my support for SB 349 AN ACT CONCERNING THE POSSESSION OF A SMALL AMOUNT OF MARIJUANA. This bill if passed, would put Connecticut on course for having a sensible drug policy that produces a long term solution to reducing drug abuse in CT. Drug laws are intended to create a society where drug abuse is lessened and the harm to society reduced. Jimmy Carter once said ""Penalties against possession of a drug should not be more damaging to an individual than the use of the drug itself; and where they are, they should be changed. Nowhere is this more clear to me than in the laws against possession of marijuana in private for personal use."1977. Over 30 years ago he knew our drug policies would be damaging our country and by the current over crowded prisons, overworked police forces, and sheer volume of wasted money we see that it is well beyond time to change CT's drug policy.

Our current drug policies actively inhibit our ability to train and retain qualified individuals by derailing young people when they need the most support, during their educational career. Students who are arrested for possessing small amounts of marijuana are not only subject to criminal penalties, but are also subject to high school or university penalties such as suspension, invasive drug tests, loss of ability to engage in extra curricular activities, loss of financial aid, and possibly expulsion. This situation creates the worst kind of Double Jeopardy. Students receive punishment from both the state legal system, and then again by the state educational system for the same crime, with the potential of being denied the ability to receive an education for simply possessing a controlled substance.

By using access to education as a punishment, we are denying our next generations the ability to become productive members of the CT community. Because our state legal system has such harsh punishments for drug offenses, our educational systems also uses overly harsh punishments, basing those policies largely on state law. By impeding on the ability of young people to get an education, your impeding on their ability to increase their socio-economic status and therefore, impeding on their ability to become a productive member of society.

To give you a more specific example, as a member of the UConn community, Our college paper reports that numerous students are arrested for possession of less than an ounce of marijuana everyday. That's dozens of students a week that were previously on track, who are now spending their study time in court rooms, drug testing facilities or looking for a new place to live. And this methodology trickles down to the high School level as well. Students are forced to endure suspensions of over a month for simple possession charges. These students ages 13-18 become isolated from their support structures, and can quickly enter a downward spiral at a critical juncture in their lives. Suspending them for such unreasonable lengths at a time when building social ties is so important, does significantly more harm than good. Our current policies are taking non-violent young people out of the academic environment and introducing them to a world of real addicts, hardened criminals, rapists, and murderers. Are these

the types of people we should be exposing our new generations to? Or should we be finding a way to reduce the harm of drug use while encouraging students to stay in school and better themselves?

By changing these laws, as SB349 would, our educational institutions can rework their punishment guidelines, and instead focus on keeping students in school where they can remain on the path to success. We can not afford to lose potential leaders in our communities in an effort to make a political statement. Drug prohibition simply does not reduce the use of drugs, and only magnifies its negative effects on society. At least 12 other states have passed similar legislation, with countless benefits to their communities. We have the ability today to change this detrimental policy and continue to be a national example in creating the leaders of tomorrow. I strongly urge every member of the judiciary to think of how our current policies will affect the future generations of CT, and vote to change them for the better by voting yes on SB 349. Thank you for your time.